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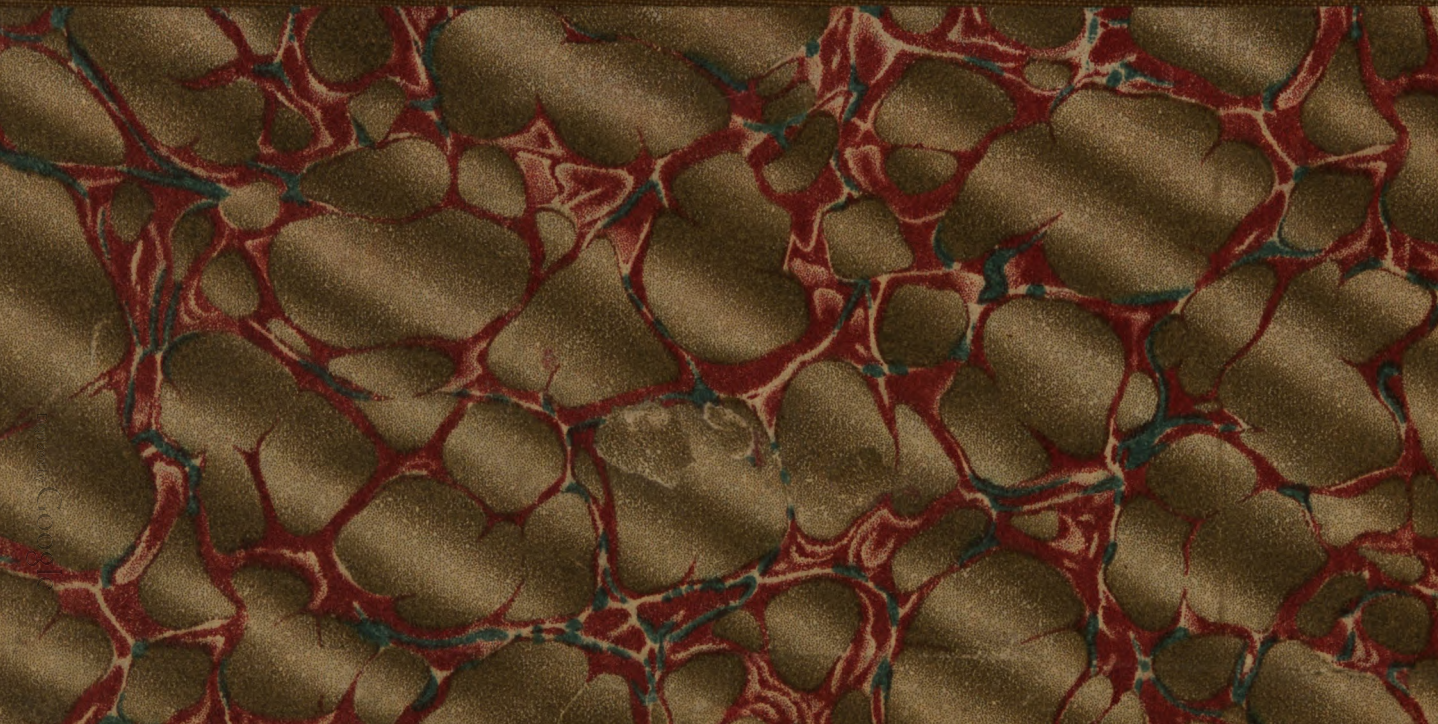

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WILLIAM DENTON,

THE

GEOLOGIST AND RADICAL

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH,

BY J. H. POWELL,

Author of "Life Pictures," &c., &c.

FOURTH EDITION.

BOSTON:
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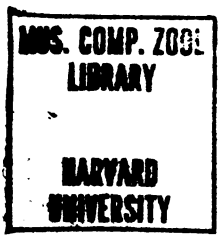

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WILLIAM DENTON,

THE

GEOLOGIST AND RADICAL.

"Who reigns within himself, and rules
Passions, desires, and fears, is more than king."—MILTON.

CHARACTER is the growth of time. Solid as rock, beautiful as love, is integrity grounded upon the virtues.

We cannot fail to appreciate high-toned character — that is, if we are not utterly devoid of appreciative powers in the direction of morals.

This old world of ours is a hard battle-field. We all, more or less, go through drill and are *forced* into fights. Woe betide us if we lack courage or honor.

"Some men defeat makes great, victory less." Others rise to Alpine peaks of success, unchanged in valor and truthfulness, through a hundred battles. These are the true heroes, conquerors over self, whom neither adversity nor fortune can demean.

It is well that character is a soul-inheritance, worth more than princely palaces, and mines of material treasure; that men have lived along the line of the centuries, whose characters were dearer to them than their lives. Well that such men live to-day. Their lives are lessons, illustrated with heroic pictures, noble actions, achievements inspiring to humanity. To such, progress owes more than words can compute.

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"To-day abhorred, to-morrow adored," the best men and women of the world fight their way through sloughs of Despond and murky morasses of dilletantes, conscious of the divine dignity of integrity.

It is pleasant to recall the lessons of biography, especially those that belong to the Reformer. From Jesus to John Brown, what a mighty array of heroes on the progressive track are marshalled before us. I fancy I hear their courageous voices in concert, chanting the World's Marseillaise of Freedom.

In the treasured hope of sketching a portrait that will be loved by multitudes, and offering illustrations of sturdy, uncompromising perseverence, as well as proofs of acquired success, which appeal pleadingly to laggards on the base of the hill of knowledge, I propose to myself the task before me. It is customary, I am aware, to write more of a man who makes his mark in any department deemed worthy, after he has dropped into the grave of his fathers, than during his life-time on earth.

I do not care to follow custom, without a due regard for reason. I think I see in William Denton, a man who has won his way to a place in the hearts of all liberalists; not that all liberalists agree with his conclusions in all things, but because he has fought a good fight against authority, in favor of enlightened individualism, and thus, to his fullest power, rendered service to liberalism.

Besides, I regard the difficulties of his life-path, which, with much fasting and unflagging will, he surmounted, a theme which points a moral, useful to those who sicken at failure and give up the task of toil in despair. Further, I feel that his work in the field of Reform is a valiant and eminently useful work, and am desirous of

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throwing what light I possess on his career, that his friends may see the struggles through which the hero grew with the man.

Satisfying his friends, what of his enemies? Enemies! Can Denton have enemies? Echo, he is heterodox — orthodoxy is never charitable, always implacable. Perhaps after reading this sketch, even he of the fold of Christ, who christened the geologist, "the special child of the Devil," may relent and recant, finding that this Devil's child owns a character for sturdy uprightness, graced by sincerity, not too frequent even in the churches, which claim special goodness through Christ. I propose to give even "the devil his due," so proceed.

The world's chief thinkers and actors have, mostly, like the Nazarene, had a manger, or something akin to it, for a birth-place. Poverty would seem indigenous to genius, were it not for the few representatives nurtured in the heart of luxury.

William Denton was born, like many another whom the world shall love to honor, in comparatively humble circumstances. He came into being with neither a silver spoon in his mouth, nor a geologist's hammer in his hand. Yet he had the germ-principle, which has enabled him to secure both; the one to sup milk with, the other to strike the rocky mountains and loosen the teeth of the orthodox devil.

On Jan. 8th, 1823, at Darlington, Durham Co., England, William became a denizen of the world.

It is a common event in the history of the poor, the birth of a child. Common and maybe saddening was the event of the dawn of another infant at the Dentons. They were poor. What right had poverty to children? How could they fly in the face of Malthus

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and Adam Smith; add to an already increased population and their own heavy burdens? Political Economy was supplanted by Methodism. Ignorance and its offspring, fanaticism, must have blinded the eyes of the parents. Four children, including William, were enough surely to tax to the full the energies of the father, whose utmost earnings at wool-combing brought the family a weekly stipend of ten shillings. The poor do not profit by Malthusian or Smithsonian deductions. That is a marked fact. They will persist in increasing the population, and rejecting the plainest politico-economic axioms.

William's father was a sturdy, true man, who had the disadvantage — ignorance of scholarship, to add to his poverty.

It was a bright day for him when he married, for he not only took unto himself an exemplary wife, but a woman who had spent years in teaching school. By his marriage he secured a tutor, and was taught by her to write and cast up accounts.

As child after child claimed food, clothing and education, the mother was necessitated to employ every available hour in binding shoes. The whole family occupied one large square room at a cheap rent, finding life not all a bed of roses.

Amongst the friends of Mrs. Denton, was a kindly old woman, Nelly Sedgwick. She maintained herself by keeping a small school.

The boy William was only three years of age when it was arranged for Nelly to initiate him into the mysteries of education.

His first lessons were acquired readily, the more so on account of the good nature of Nelly. She was incapable of hurting a hair of any child under her care.

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Yet she had a stick long enough to reach every pupil, and used it to gently tap the heads of youthful delinquents without rising from her seat.

The boy's progress was rapid, owing in a great measure to the help of his father, who spent every spare minute in instructing the boy. At four years he could read the Bible, a pleasing fact for his parents. He was transferred from old Nelly's school to the British Penny School in Darlington.

He soon began to manifest a relish for books. Naturally his taste was governed by the views of his parents. The Methodist Library, at that time, was to the young student a world of marvelous and exhaustless riches. Baxter's "Saint's Rest," "Pilgrim's Progress," and volumes of "The Methodist Magazine" were, speaking figuratively, swallowed by him with avidity. He attended the Sunday School, and soon grew familiar with its ritualism.

When he reached eight years he was called upon to recite from memory a chapter of the Bible. It was a red-letter day with the school. The pupils all assembled in the church. The parents, visitors, and the minister were listeners. William was with others in the gallery. He was expected to bow his head to the congregation before speaking his piece; it was his first appearance before an audience in the character of speaker. All was breathless silence in the church. The boy knew his task; down went his head on the desk, the sound rung through the sacred edifice. Why did he bow so low and awkwardly? A general titter which was irrepressible, brought the minister to his feet, who solemnly reprimanded them for daring to laugh aloud in the house of God.

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During this time, William's mind exulted in an atmosphere outside of science. He had not the faintest conception that other themes than those which had occupied his attention, like new orbs in the heavens, would yet unfold unimagined beauties to his rapt gaze.

"A change came o'er the spirit of his dream." A new teacher, William Shotton, came to the day school. He was a *rara avis*.

William marvelled at his erudition, and delighted to listen to his practical lessons in Phrenology and Electricity. Shotton was a Baptist. William often heard from his lips conclusions on religious subjects, antimethodistic. The tutor had a galvanic battery of his own make with which he experimented, to the delectation of the pupils.

New fields of thought dawned upon the boy. He was not himself conscious at the time of the silent revolution working in his soul.

There was a library in connection with the school in which William Shotton was teacher. Religious books, mostly tinctured with Methodism, had strongly impressed the student's mind, necessarily influencing his life. Glorious! "The Penny Magazine," "The Saturday Magazine," and Chambers' Works fell into his hands.

The world had no material riches that could purchase the privilege he owned. Happiness like his was not to be found in animal pursuits. True, his home was humble, his parents poor; coarse food was to him a luxury. He lived in a heaven not specially apportioned to the saints, yet he did not find rest.

At this stage of his career, William commenced his studies in Geology, reading closely on the subject and preparing, hammer in hand, for future researches.

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Eleven years old, he must earn something for the "glorious privilege of being independent."

He was hired by a currier of Darlington for a year, and paid a half-crown — about 60 cents, a week.

He worked valiantly, with a growing distaste for the business. Being young, he was considered of little account, except for the work he accomplished. The foreman, with the spirit but not the genius of Dean Swift, used to fling the weekly wages at the boy, as the dean is said to have flung his benefactions at the poor who sought his patronage.

During his stay in the currier's shop, the boy had an opportunity of exhibiting for the first time, his powers in debate. A split in the old Methodist society excited the religious world. The spirit of reform wore the disguise of the devil and stirred up immense commotion. Multitudes grew tired of the rule of authority in Methodism. It was to them Popery, and nothing better. They desired to have a voice in the regulation of the church. Hence the split.

William's father, a firm Methodist of good standing, took sides with the progressives. William himself stood on his father's platform. An old man working with William asserted himself true blue to the old society, and looked upon the dissentients as infidels. The wordy conflict between the man and boy was hot, but it had the effect on William of a strong mental stimulant. Doubtless there was much surprise manifested by those who heard the debate, at the ability of the youthful disputant.

Another change. He left the currier's shop, and for three months was employed by a Methodist minister in his grocery store in Darlington. This arrangement was brought about by the boy's father, who supposed

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that the minister was a just man and one that eschewed evil. Alas! the Lord's chosen vessel in the Methodist world was unsound, not in doctrine, but in principle. He gave false weight by placing a piece of lead on the scale. William told his father, who, being a strictly honest man, went to the Methodist-minister-grocer and denounced the dishonesty of cheating the public, adding, that the example was injurious to the morals of his boy.

Again, at school, the boy lost little time. He studied, studied only to learn the force of Pope's truism: "Knowledge is to know how little can be known." Still he read and thought, inspired by every fresh addition to his mental store.

In the field of romance he discovered food for imagination as a diversion from severer studies. Who prompted him to select WALTER SCOTT for his novelist? None could charm him more. He felt the dramatic realism of Scott perfect as the living pictures of Nature. Whilst retaining a grateful appreciation of the great Scotch novelist, he does not appear to have cultivated his taste for romance to any noticeable degree.

William was about this time elevated to the post of chief-monitor in the school, receiving one shilling a week for his services. After a lapse of months he was sent to a grammar-school in Darlington, where he acquired the rudiments of Greek and Latin.

Sickness, like a ghost, haunted the home of the Dentons. The father had fought the demon, Want, at the wool business, which seriously affected his health. At length the doctors said that he must work no more at the business, or death would ensue. Here was a terrible misfortune, — the chief support suspended for nearly twelve months. Privation was a spectre *in* their path.

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It was almost a miracle that death did not mercifully close their book of sufferings.

Where were the Methodists, those with whom the family had so often prayed? No one came near to offer *Christian* sympathy. The family were reduced. They might starve, or go to Tophet. What did it matter to the adherents of John Wesley, — the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus, — who could not but know of their severe physical needs? Language is too poor to depict the feelings of Mrs. Denton, as they suffered with the knowledge of the selfish indifference of the Methodists.

When the father was sufficiently recovered to attend to business, he started from his home to hawk dry goods. The basket he carried contained his whole stock of wares. Success crowned his industry. He bought a donkey and panniers, and afterwards a cart, and was enabled to go his rounds with comparative ease and in less time. The sunshine of prosperity was looming in the social heavens. The hawker was enabled to open a grocery store at Shildon, in the colliery district, eight miles distant, where they removed. Fortune still smiled. A distant relative died, leaving Mrs. Denton fifty pounds. They felt wondrously rich, and dreamed of future additions. Like a wise man, the father used the legacy for the extension of his business.

At ten years, William became a member of the Temperance society. At fourteen, he was apprenticed to Timothy Hackworth, to learn the trade of machinist. He soon learned to use the file, and discovered his employer to be an old file, with small regard for conscience. Working on iron during the day, our future Geologist did not waste his leisure hours at night. He

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became a member of the Shildon Mechanics' Institute, read Lyell's Works, and attended scientific lectures.

At this stage of his career, a new impetus was given to his Geological studies by the formation of a Railway Tunnel in Shildon. He frequently hunted for specimens among the debris, and at length found some fossils, which he delightedly took to his mother. She did not believe that his specimens were fossils. The boy set to work to convince her that she erred, and succeeded. No one stimulated him to the pursuit of Geology. The impulse to his studies in that department he obtained from books and from his own soul.

At sixteen, he joined the Methodist Association Church, and before his seventeenth year, commenced to lecture on Temperance and to give addresses on Religion at the Sunday School.

Occasionally he would go round with the minister, and give out the hymns, and offer the initiatory prayer.

His mind was ever active. He wasted no time in frivolities.

A half dozen young men, of which he was one, united to hold meetings in large farm kitchens, on the open green, or wherever opportunity offered. Their plan was to speak a quarter of an hour each, or longer if inspired. Questions were often asked the speakers by workingmen, eager for thought. In time, by submitting to public criticism, they became adepts at speaking. Associations formed at those meetings had a lasting influence on William. Time has worked changes with a ruthless hand. Subsequently, one became a Methodist minister, another a school teacher, another a Unitarian minister, Denton a radical and Geologist.

Having once tasted the fruits of discussion, the Geo

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logical aspirant was glad to embrace the opportunity of taking part in theological debates held in the church. Heresy began to manifest in his speech. He had read Combe's "Constitution of Man," a book that created a revolution in favor of radical truths.

The minister said to him, "William, do you know that Combe's Constitution is a very dangerous book?" To prove the statement, he cited Combe's illustration of the two boats.

Poor minister! Denton had gone ahead too far to feel trouble at the word "dangerous," even from saintly lips. All he cared to know was that Combe's illustration is true.

Joseph Barker came into the neighborhood to preach. He was poor, and his coat told the sorrowful story. He preached, trusting to Providence for support. He doubtless wanted much, but he got little for his labors. His influence however was great. Many of the more intelligent became Barkerites, and adopted novel measures in their lives and meetings.

WILLIAM DENTON was not behind. A more excellent way was shown than the rigid views of the Methodists. Important questions were discussed, relating to Church government and personal adornment. Use, rather than beauty was the outward sign of Christianity. It was a sin to indulge in useless gew-gaws or extravagance in dress.

Young Denton caught the ascetic fever, and presented himself in a coat without buttons and button holes. What need had he for them? He did not require to button his coat. A sensation was created by his Quaker-like practice of wearing his coat. Still he was for a time master of the situation, despite the ridicule of worldlings

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Joseph's coat of many colors was evidently not esteemed. This may be on account of the pattern being lost. Denton's was a triumph of the day of *useful* things. The wearer, however, outgrew the buttonless coat as he grew into the sphere of manhood.

He was now nineteen, learning his trade under Timothy Hackworth. Life's paths are not all pleasantness and peace.

Hackworth told his apprentice to go to a brewery to repair some machinery. This was terrible in Denton's eyes. He talked of his conscientious scruples.

"Conscience!" sneered Hackworth. "You have got your conscience as fine as a needle point. You *shall* go."

"No. I cannot consent."

"Then you can go home!" thundered the employer.

The employee obeyed.

He returned for a very short period to the shop of Timothy Hackworth. Thrown out of employment before the expiration of his term of apprenticeship, he began to look about for something to do.

He would try teaching. He wrote to the Normal Institute, Boro Road, London, and obtained admission as a student, and in six months was appointed to a school in Newport, Monmouthshire.

London, vast hive of industry and learning! Father of Cities! could not the student learn the true mission of life within thy ancient sanctuaries?

During his term at the Normal School, he heard all the prominent lecturers and debaters. He attended open air meetings at Smithfield, took part in them, and often left undecided as to who was right. Still, he gleaned facts, and discovered new incentives to mental improvement.

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He lectured on Temperance, and preached frequently in London.

The writings of Barker, during this period, had a powerful influence over the student's mind. Joseph had not yet left the Evangelicals (he has since returned to them.) His terse, Cobbitt-like diction and convincing logic had a charm for the rising orator, which to this day is remembered by him with gratitude.

When he reached Newport he entered on his mission with zeal, teaching school in the day and lecturing at night and on Sundays.

Newport had then a population of 20,000, and over 300 grog shops. His work was before him.

What were the ministers doing? Some of them he knew to favor the drinking system. One was carried home drunk by his deacons on Saturday night, and was in the pulpit looking as modest as a maid on Sunday.

Finding the Temperance party but a handful of men, Denton felt all the more need for heroic effort on his part.

He continued to read and study, growing away from the Methodism of his youth. Once satisfied that he was right, he cared not for consequences. The church and he were not enrapport. He could not assume a faith he did not believe, so the two became estranged.

His mind merged to Radical Unitarianism, yet he did not attach himself to the body of Unitarians. Once free from the narrow shackles of creed he preached with new power.

Cardiff is distant twelve miles from Newport. Denton frequently, on Saturday, walked to Cardiff, preached three times on Sunday, and walked back on Monday morning in time for the duties of the school.

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To fight for Temperance in England at that time, especially in the district in which he labored, was hazardous. Denton braved all dangers. In the open air, as the snow was mantling the earth, he has fought drink, firm as a rock, impervious to rotten eggs and insult. He has been pulled from the stand and maltreated by the agents of publicans, when there was not a solitary minister of the gospel who had the courage to offer a word of sympathy and encouragement to the speaker.

Not afraid to investigate and assert results, our indefatigable student entered the mystical realm of Mesmerism.

Learned works had fallen into his hand, or he had sought them, written in the interest of Psychology, and subjects akin. Elliotson, Esdaile and Ashburner in the field of Therapeuthy had *proven* the power of the human will over disease. Townsend and Deleuze had ably written on the science.

Denton resolved to test the matter for himself. He did so with his customary care. He operated on subjects, producing at once pleasing, and to him, novel manifestations. No sooner convinced that Mesmerism was one of the verities, than he became an advocate in its interest. Unswerving and devoted as ever, he lectured from town to town on the tabooed science of Mesmerism, illustrating his lectures by experiment. Space forbids a record of the deeply instructive phenomena which he elicited in private and public. He was not satisfied to parrot forth, "pooh, pooh! humbug! opposed to the laws of Nature, &c." The question had occupied his attention, "Were the statements of Mesmerists mere imaginings?" To answer it, more was required than a mere ejaculation of contempt. He wisely

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tested and studied, giving the world the benefit of his investigations.

Two years and a half had passed at Newport. Temperance and Radicalism made him a legion of foes, and some hearty friends. News reached him that his father was bankrupt, and again destitute, all his goods being sold to pay his debts.

The son sent for his parents and sisters. When they reached Newport clouds thickened in their social horizon. The young man was dismissed from the school for heresy. Terrible privations ensued. Annie, now Annie Denton Cridge, kept a private school, and did all she could to help the family. They rented a small cottage in the country, and a piece of land, which the father endeavored to cultivate. Denton tried in vain to get employment at his trade. Assistance came from the kindly hand of the Rev. G. Armstrong, Unitarian minister of Bristol, which was gratefully remembered. The family frequently made a meal on cabbages alone.

At length, unable to see his kindred submit to such privation, Denton sold his books. He would have parted with anything except integrity rather. The gall cup was at his lips, he drank to the dregs.

Sunshine again. A gentleman wrote offering him twenty shillings a week to act as assistant in a school in Camberwell, London.

Alas! the principal was a Calvinist-bigot. His newly ensconced assistant and he could not agree. They were at the antipodes of religious thought. The result, Denton lost his position at Camberwell almost as soon as he obtained it.

Job is said to have been a patient man, what patience did he exhibit superior to Denton?

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Fortune had not entirely forsaken the radical wanderer. He had a friend employed by the South Eastern Railroad Company. A lucky thought. He decided to see him with the view of obtaining a situation under the company. To his delight, he was employed in the capacity of clerk in the company's office, New Cross.

He soon sent for his parents, and was enabled to maintain them decently in London.

Whilst attending to his duties in the office, he never lost sight of his soul's ideals.

London was a perfect Babel of tongues. Although his voice was often exercised on the rostrum, it was apparently lost in the general hum. He felt the want of a field for mental and moral achievement. Ambition had claims on him which London seemed to ignore. Besides it required extraordinary powers to make a mark on the target of public opinion, which was already covered with marks. It was, therefore, with no regret that he consented to be transferred with the New Cross offices to Ashford in Kent.

Ashford soon knew him for a sturdy defender of Temperance and Truth.

He liked his situation, and stayed many months, employing his spare hours in reading, writing, lecturing and tract distributing. Such was his zeal that he was regarded by many as an oracle, and by all as an intelligent, honest worker.

While at Ashford, he issued his first composition ; an essay on the deleterious effects of tobacco. Always radical, he knew no half-way methods of teaching truth.

Many a happy day passed in Ashford. His literary and reformative life was there radiated by the spirit of love.

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Miss Caroline Gilbert sympathised with his views and efforts at elevating humanity. They frequently met. The result, their lives began to "round to a single star," their hearts "to beat as one."

During this period, his favorite study was not neglected. In fact, all through his career in England, since he had conceived a taste for science, Geology more or less absorbed his attention.

Ashford is in an interesting Geological region where fossils abound, many of which he collected. Had he confined himself to scientific studies, many of the struggles through which he passed, would have been unknown to him.

Ashford was intensely orthodox, a hard field for radicalism. Never mind, the harder the sod, the more need for the plow.

He used often to send the Bellman or Town Crier round to announce the subjects of his lectures, and time and place of meeting. No one interfered with him in connection with his daily avocation. "All went merry as a marriage bell," except the orthodox opposition and spite resulting as an inevitable effect of his advocacy of reform. At length "he became a mark for blight and desolation."

The Bellman was sent round to announce a Sunday lecture on "The Hireling Ministry." Good Heavens! was the man mad? The church minister came and begged of him not to lecture, assuring him that he would lose his situation if he did. Denton was incorrigible. The minister went to the superintendent and the directors, and telegraphed to the president. All was useless. Denton *would* lecture. A posse of special constables was sworn in. Sunday came. So did Denton to the

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ground he had chosen for his stand. Crowds assembled. The orator stood on a chair, and after reading, commenced.

One of the constables asked him to desist—he took no notice. Again he asked him to cease. Denton was deaf to his entreaties. The same constable then went behind the chair, and pulling the speaker's coat-tails, dragged him from it. The other constables crowded upon him, and pushed him along, — a moving spectacle rhetoric and logic.

At this stage a young lady fainted. The speaker still harangued the crowd. What the consequences would have been it is easy to conjecture, had not a timely friend appeared.

"Come up to my room, Denton, and speak from the window," said the man, and pushed him safely into the house.

For an hour and a half the speaker held the crowd outside spell-bound with his eloquent appeal to the logic of facts and common sense.

The ministers were wroth; so were the special constables—the former stooping to meanness that the latter would have despised. The clerk was dismissed at the bidding of the ministers.

The superintendent said that he parted from him with regret, but he had no power to go against orders. He gave him an excellent character, also a present. The workmen and his fellow clerks all made him presents, and expressed sorrow at losing him.

Thus closed the experiences of William Denton in the mother country.

He could not live without constant sacrifices in England, unless he consented to conceal his radical-

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ism. This he would not do—so resolved to emigrate to America.

The New World had often unfolded her wonderful treasures in dreams to the emigrant. He had hope and courage, and could not but feel rejoiced at the opportunity of tempting fortune where so many heroic ones had succeeded after failing through long years in England.

In the year 1848 he landed in Philadelphia, hoping to find it a real city of brotherly love.

He was not so poor as thousands have been on first pressing the soil of America, yet he was not to be compared with Crœsus.

His purse contained some five or six sovereigns, English money, his entire stock—not enough to live in idleness and luxury, but enough, economically expended, to secure him from want for a few weeks.

He had riches of another kind, which Rothchild and all the merchants could not purchase—riches of mind which could never be stolen by dishonest clerks or managers of banks. New incentives, new scenes, high hopes, all were with him.

Alas! why did he not secure his money so that he could use it as necessity prompted? It was stolen. The thief escaped. Denton knew not what to do for the best.

To remain in Philadelphia without money and friends would be a folly not to be dallied with for an instant. The best thing to do was to go to a friend who resided at Potsville, over one hundred miles distant.

The journey was quite an undertaking for a man with but three cents in his possession.

Trusting to the occurrences of the way and his own indomitable will, the man started. He walked along

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the railway track some miles, until he came to a coal train. He lost no time in mounting into the rear car. Away went the train, carrying the pilgrim toward his destination.

"What are you doing there?" thundered the brakeman, who caught sight of Denton. "Out with you, and in no time!"

Quite a problem, more difficult than any which had before perplexed him. He did not appreciate being forced from the train. But to accomplish the feat "in no time" was too much to ask of him. Summoning all his persuasive powers, he assailed the brakeman on the side of his good nature—telling him that he, Denton, was all the way from England, bound for Potsville, not omitting the facts of the robbery.

"You are an Englishman, are you? Then you may ride on. If you had been one of them damned Dutchmen, you should have gone out in no time."

Early in the morning, tired and hungry, the pilgrim reached Potsville. His first efforts were directed in the search for his friend. Misfortune on misfortune! He had gone to work twenty miles further.

Not yet daunted, the traveller determined to walk the additional twenty miles. He needed refreshment for stimulus. He had but the three cents. What could he purchase in the way of delicacies for such an insignificant sum? Bread and milk. Ah! a repast fit for epicures. Denton entered the house of a Dutchman, and summoning courage, asked for three cents' worth of bread and milk. The man called to his wife to bring the traveller the desired repast.

The customer was never better supplied at the price, and certainly no caterer for the patronage of hungry travellers ever made less profit on a meal.

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Reaching his friend, Denton hoped to be employed through his agency. The fates were unpropitious. What could he do? Shedding tears would not aid the matter. He resolved to return to Philadelphia and seek employment there.

His friend gave him fifty cents, and parted from him with the kindest feelings. The indomitable Denton walked all night across the Blue Ridge to Harrisburg, a distance of thirty miles. From there, he purchased for twenty-five cents, a ticket to the nearest depot on the Philadelphia route. He was weary and sleepy. The bank of the railway afforded him a bed, refreshing as down. He slept, but was not left to peaceful dreams. A man roused him, fearing danger if he should roll on the track.

A freight train came along in due course; our fatigued wanderer got on to it—additional freight not included in the company's way bills.

On the train he found a fellow pilgrim, a returned Mexican soldier, who had chosen the same means as himself to reach Philadelphia. They talked matters over freely, and grew pleased with each other. Halting at Lancaster, Denton expended his remaining twenty-five cents for a bed, which he shared with his companion.

The next morning early they both succeeded in getting on another freight train. They were not destined to ride far without trouble. The brakeman ordered them off. They declined for a time to obey. He threatened, with all the vehemence of an enraged pope, to do more than excommunicate them when they reached Philadelphia. At length, worried by his continued demands to leave the train, they got off, only to get on again as soon as opportunity offered without detection.

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They had little trouble about the threats of the brakeman to report them at Philadelphia when they were on the train at first—now that they were on a second time, unknown to the brakeman, all trouble of the kind vanished, "like the baseless fabric of a vision."

Mercy! The train breaks apart, leaving them behind with the latter half of the train to their reflections. The scene was ludicrous, worthy the pencil of Hogarth. What could they do better than pluck apples from a neighboring orchard and walk ahead? They reached Philadelphia on Saturday night and parted company.

Moneyless and hungry, Denton was necessitated to pawn his watch. No sooner did he get a loan on it, than he entered a store and bought a loaf, and, like Franklin, went eating it through the streets.

On Monday morning an advertisement in "The Ledger," calling for a teacher, attracted his attention. No time was lost. He lessened the miles by quick walking, reaching the village of Jenkintown after fancying every man he saw going in the same direction an applicant for the situation.

Fortune was once more propitious. Nothing like perseverance. Sitting on doorsteps, wailing and waiting for something to turn up, is not the way to honest success. He felt this in every nerve of his highly sensitive organization.

He was examined and appointed to the school, but had to wait until the vacation was over. He boarded with one of the school directors, a Methodist, and most excellent man.

Whilst at this school Denton was active as usual. He lectured in the schoolhouse to crowds of eager listeners. He also lectured before the Lyceum at Abington, near Jenkintown.

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From this school he obtained an appointment to another, a few miles distant. By dint of frugality he was enabled to save a little money. His filial feelings were strong. Father, mother, sisters and Caroline Gilbert, his affianced, were necessary to his happiness. He sent for them, and on their arrival, settled them in comfortable quarters. In a few months Caroline and he were married, the nuptial knot being tied by a Justice of the Peace.

About this time he commenced writing "Commonsense thoughts on the Bible." Summer came; school closed. He must turn his attention to something profitable, his responsibilities not admitting a recess for him from labor.

With a brave heart he went to Gloucester, opposite Philadelphia, and entered a machine-shop in the capacity of clerk. No sooner employed than he began to act in the realm of Thought. He helped to form a debating society, which had a beneficial effect. Next, he held a discussion with a Presbyterian minister on the Sunday question.

The spirit of Persecution failed to operate against him socially in Gloucester. He held his position in the machine-shop until it was broken up on account of one of the firm going to California.

Another change in his eventful life of changes. Philadelphia was his next field of operations. There he secured a position in a machine-shop, and was soon known to be an earnest and logical lecturer. He chose Temperance for his theme, and occupied the rostrum on Sunday evenings.

Pressing ahead and living economically, he was enabled to save money. All sailed along pleasantly.

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Scarcely a foreboding cloud marred the horizon of his paradise, when, like a startling thunder clap from the serene heavens came the death of his wife. No language can describe the effect of this unlooked-for bereavement. Philadelphia had no longer anything to hold him. For a time he seemed careless of everything. His friends, studies, ambitions, all were as naught.

So soon as he recovered from the terrible shock which had prostrated his energies, he resolved to take a trip to Western Virginia. There at Guyàndotte, which he reached by canal and rail over the Alleghany mountains, he settled on a few acres of land, most of it woodland, with a log cabin upon it. Here he lived by himself for six weeks. Not because he had any predilection for absolute solitude. There was no neighbor nearer than half a mile. He sent for his father, mother and youngest sister, Annie, the eldest sister, being engaged as governess in a private family.

Denton worked with his pen, axe and spade, chopping wood, planting corn, potatoes, watermelons, etc., and writing essays on scientific and reformative subjects.

Nor was Geology forgotten. He rambled through the woods, adding to his store of facts on that most interesting and instructive branch of science. By invitation, he taught school in the neighborhood, and occasionally lectured. Trouble loomed in the atmosphere. His anti-slavery sentiments oozed out, and vengeance threatened to ride him on a rail.

He then went down the river to Cincinnati, hoping to obtain a school. He had his shattered hopes and experiences for reward. No school could be got. He did not feel disposed to fail without an active effort.

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He went to all the machine-shops in the city, but could not succeed in obtaining the "leave to toil" at his trade. He had to "learn to wait;" was not permitted to "labor" at anything like reasonable profit.

He was in Cincinnati, without the means to get home to Guyandotte. Something must be done. His father had been turning a penny by making and selling brushes. Fortunately Denton had some brushes in his carpet sack. He disposed of them, but did not receive enough money to pay his fare. He stood by a steamer for Guyandotte, puzzled to know how to obtain the additional sum required Men were at work carrying hides on board. For ten cents an hour William Denton agreed to assist, and by that means was enabled to make the necessary amount up for the fare.

On reaching the log cabin, his parents and sister gladly welcomed him; but alas! none of them had means. Immediate action alone could save them.

Another school became the oasis in their desert of poverty. For three months Denton taught for the bread that perisheth, and means to get back to Cincinnati in the fall — a better time to secure a school than when he was last there.

Another disappointment. Cincinnati was not yet ready to offer him a position in any capacity. This time he did not turn his face towards Guyandotte, but went to Dayton by canal, and was installed in a school near Dayton. The log cabin had no longer any charms for Denton. He sent for his parents and sisters, and they were once more comfortably settled together.

Fortune smiled on the family. The sisters both got schools and added their savings to those of the brother, towards building a house in Dayton. Just as prosperity began to sweeten their life-cup, old Mr. Denton's earth-career closed, like a flower in the night. The golden bowl was broken, the silver cord loosed. The son delivered an affectionate discourse at the funeral of the sire. Death had put in his claim. What could offset it? Not surely vain lamentations. Work! work! this was Denton's motto. He finished writing "Common Sense

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thoughts on the Bible," wrote and talked on temperance Slavery, and general Religious Reform.

About this time Dr. Buchanan's "Journal of Health," gave Denton an impetus in a new field of research. The outer world with all its wonderful facts was not alone satisfying to his ever progressive mind. The inner mysteries of Psychometry and Spiritualism "had power upon him." Annie was found to be a good Psychometer, and was the first to demonstrate to him the truth of Psychometry. Fairly launched on the sea of the invisible, he was not long in reaching the port of Spiritualism. Circles were formed in their own house and manifestations of a test character elicited. Afterwards he witnessed phenomena, through a multitude of mediums, all over the country. At their circles in Dayton, the parents after leaving the body, frequently returned to convince the children that death does not destroy the ties of affection.

He had freedom to pursue the even tenor of his way, until he boldly advocated the development theory of man's origin. This made him obnoxious to the powers that in a measure ruled him. He was dismissed from the school at the very time he was elevated to be principal. During his school-career near Dayton, he did not lose opportunities for Geological studies, he made himself acquainted with the region, and added valuable links to the chain of his scientific experiences. One door closed — another opened. At Hamilton, Butler Co., he was appointed principal of the Grammar School, notwithstanding the spiteful effort of his Daytonian persecutors to ruin his prospects by defamatory letters. He found Hamilton too small, needing room for soul-growth; so, for the third time, tried Cincinnati, and was successful at length.

Employed in one of the Public Schools, he labored zealously, teaching day and night, to increase his income. This became necessary to enable him to pay off a standing debt on the house at Dayton. The school-house in which he was doomed to teach through long hours was dark and ill-ventilated, which preyed upon

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his health. Cincinnati offered a field for intellectual aspiration. He was not remiss in taking advantage of it. Amongst his acquaintances were the Longleys. They induced him to write for their Phonetic paper, "The Type of the Times." Elias Longley had charge of the Printing department and employed female compositors, amongst whom was Elizabeth M. Foote, who subsequently became Mrs. Denton.

"The course of true love never did run smoothly," is a trite adage which found echo in the career of Denton and Miss Foote. She had conceived a liking for the bloomer costume and had the courage to brave the opposition of the slaves of fashion whose sense of propriety was outraged by her hardihood in walking the streets of Cincinnati in pants. Denton had considerable trouble often, in shielding her from insult, made doubly provoking by boys set on by their elders, who added cowardice to ignorance.

The marriage took place anon, but not till after Denton's mother had gone to join her waiting husband in the spirit-spheres. It was not her privilege even to look through physical eyes on the face of her son's future wife.

"*That* is morning, says Emerson," "to cease for a bright hour to be a prisoner of this sickly body, and to become as large as nature." Denton must have realised the beauty of this, when Psychometry gave him glimpses of the Universal Oneness.

Mrs. Denton proved to be a Psychometer. A new world magical as America, on the rapt vision of Columbus, must have dawned in glowing glory on our Geologist's inner sight, as he pursued his investigations slowly and cautiously.

Facts, strange and unaccountable on the hypotheses of the schools met him on all hands. He had the courage to stare them in the face, but he could not stare them out of countenance. Is it wonderful that he became a Spiritualist?

Study — study — in school and out. What human system could bear up under a constant strain most of the time in unhealthy conditions?

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He became a confirmed dyspeptic. How he regretted neglecting aids to health! His friends all feared that he would sink into a decline. He was not disposed to fall a victim to disease, without an effort at recovery. He did not run to the drug stores crying piteously to the god of Hippocrates.

His wife went to her parents, and he on a sailing and walking expedition. He started with seventy dollars in his pocket, in company with a friend who desired to visit Considerant; Phalanstery in Texas. For three dollars he purchased a deck passage to New Orleans. They took a deck-passage from there to Shreveport, on the Red River. Before reaching Shreveport, his physical condition was slightly improved. After leaving the ship, they commenced to walk — but so weak was Denton, that he could only make nine miles the first day, and that, by walking the entire day. The next day eleven miles was accomplished. A day's intermission — then thirteen miles — and so on, continuing to walk and rest, as best they could, until they arrived at Dallas in Western Texas. At the Phalanstery they rested a week. Denton found his health much improved, and resolved to continue walking. His friend declined to accompany him further.

Alone, on foot, went Denton as far as the Brazos River, and returned to the Phalanstery. He collected a host of specimens, fossils and minerals, and then walked to the Gulf of Mexico. During this trip our Geologist walked in all about eleven hundred miles, the wiser and stronger for the exercise.

He was often obliged to become his own washerwoman, using a friendly river for a tub. Choosing a retired spot, he would divest himself of his shirt, and washing it, spread it upon the ground, and lie in the sun until it was dry. He appreciated the Bible injunction, "Cleanliness is next to godliness," and did not fear criticism from the ladies on the getting up of his linen.

He returned to Cincinnati after three months, cured of his dyspepsia, with at least 20 pounds added to his weight, having travelled over 7000 miles.

Finding his place at the school occupied, he took

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another at Covington, but in one month was dismissed for infidelity. He now made a solemn vow, live or die, he would never teach another school.

Thus closed from tutorship, it was necessary to decide on action in some department of labor. Lecturing had been his forte hitherto, he loved it, and decided to make the platform his business.

Struggles must needs come, disappointments and suffering follow, still there remained the satisfaction of being able to shed light in dark places.

The themes he chose embraced Phonetics, Anti-slavery, Temperance, Geology, Bible Questions, and Spiritualism. The Longleys issued an edition of "Common Sense Thoughts on the Bible." Denton went back to his home at Dayton, bought type, and with the assistance of his wife, printed a second edition of 5000.

Carrying his pamphlets with him to sell at his lectures, he was occasionally able to keep the wolf from the door. Sometimes, unable to meet his railroad expenses, still he "toiled on, hoped on."

His next work was a volume, "Poems for Reformers," issued from his own press.

Discussions crowded upon him thick and fast, one of which was published.

He lectured through Indiana, Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, New York and Canada.

In January, 1856, his name appeared conjointly with John Patterson as editor of "The Social Revolution," a monthly serial published in Cincinnati. To this magazine he contributed considerable in prose and verse.

After realizing so many sad experiences, it is hardly to be expected that he could fail to write bitterly. But no. His heart, like his head, was sound. Speaking to the friends of reform in "The Social Revolution," he says:

"I say be of good cheer. The winter of our Past is melting away, and the sunny beams of the Present are reviving to the soul. The Future is before us, radiant with beauty; labor, and it shall be yours. Our enemies are numerous, but their weapons are weaker than straws; their armor is made of a spider's web that a babe can

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pierce. Live the true life; ever obedient to your noblest thought. Walk the path of Duty, however steep or arduous. Be mild as a summer's breath, firm as the deep-rooted mountain, pure as a ray of light; and the truth ye teach and live shall triumph over all."

The house at Dayton was sold. By invitation of some friends, Denton went out to Kansas to locate on Government land, there to speak, write, and, providing the funds were obtained, start a People's College.

By the assistance of friends in Kansas, he bought a claim of 160 acres of land, with a log cabin upon it, into which he removed his family.

He was not able to furnish the cabin luxuriously. In fact, such would not accord with the hut. But he furnished it after a fashion, manufacturing the necessary articles with his own hand. He worked diligently on his land, and planted about 3000 fruit trees. He lectured principally on Geology, and added greatly to his collection of specimens. At Lawrence, he lectured with marked success in the open air.

Kansas could not hold him. His star was in the East. Away to lecture and raise funds.

The East opened up avenues for him which proved more or less profitable. He did not return to Kansas.

At Chagrin Falls, Professor, now Senator Garfield, met him in debate on the origin of man. The discussion lasted a week, adding to Denton's list of friends.

Years of travel, lecturing, writing and collecting specimens. Then in connection with Alfred Cridge, he published "The Vanguard," at Cleveland. Then the spirit of war turned the faces and hairs of men and women white.

Denton was at Mineral Point, Wisconsin, when the first gun was fired. From that time to its conclusion public attention was diverted to war topics. Little support did the Geologist obtain, and for that little he was grateful. He stayed nearly a year, studying the Geology of the lead region. He visited Lake Superior, studied the formations there among the copper mines. Away through Canada. He lectured in Montreal, Quebec, and Ottawa.

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In these travels his family were with him, and he was obtaining through his wife's Psychometric powers, material for "The Soul of Things."

An invitation brought him to Boston, where he delivered a course of Geological lectures in the Meionaon.

In due time, "The Soul of Things" saw the light. It was well received, and has reached the fourth edition. A second volume is nearly complete, a sequel to "The Soul of Things," which adds fact and argument on Psychometry.

The Rev. W. L. Thompson issued a reproduction of "The Soul of Things," in England. In his preface to the work, he, doubtless from a misconception, states that Denton was a graduate of one of the English colleges. Such a statement, so unfounded, must have hurt Denton's reputation in the mother country. Many of his former friends may have thought that he was ashamed of his humble origin, and the common schools in which he was educated.

"Our Planet. Its Past and Future," — As indicated by Geology, was the next work issued by him. That also has run into four editions.

In the meantime, the author has continued to lecture and write, making New England his principal field of operations. A series of his discourses are published. Others are to follow. He has also a work nearly ready on the origin of man.

He spent nearly a summer in explorations in Tennessee, and another in Colorado, and made discoveries of veins of Petroleum coal, and brought home the greatest number of fossil insects yet discovered in America, details of which may be found in the "Annuals of Scientific Discovery."

Smiles would do well in a future edition of "Self-Help," to add William Denton to his list of subjects. I know few men more deserving, and who have accomplished more under similar difficulties. Had he chosen to confine his observations to science, leaving Theology to the priests and the devil, he might have risen to the ararat of social success with less risk and toil.

He has not been content to steal other men's thunder

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and endeavor to pass for sterling metal without the mint-stamp of genius. His life has been a series of battles with want and ignorance. Valiant as Hannibal, he has fought and fainted not.

Narrow-sighted souls have no words to bestow of commendation. He is heterodox, and, according to their views, ought to be damned here as well as hereafter.

It is gratifying to see a man like him growing in public favor, who never depends on sensationalism or puff paragraphs for success. He has taken his stand on the ground of Fact, and is ever learning in the school of Science.

New England has proved a field of useful and remunerative labor to him. He has built himself a commodious house on ten acres of land, in Wellesley, Mass., where with his wife and five children he loves to feel at home.

He is a veritable Hercules at mental labor. Books, Mss. and geological specimens multiply in his *sanctum-sanctorum*. During my first visit, whilst inspecting some of his fossils, I said:

"Sermons in stones and good in everything."

He smiled, and remarked that he had taken my quotation for the Text of a Discourse.

No wonder the fame of the man is extending. Granite will endure when paint shall have vanished. He is of the granite quality of mind. His whole logic rests upon accredited Fact. Had he been content to indulge in wordy rhodomontade instead of cultured speeches, his place would be far back on the rostrum. Look at him. He is a man marked with the struggles of the past. His features are records of the battles through which his soul has come out victor. No amount of success could change him.

He is a representative of unconquerable energy — a man who has made himself despite of conditions that would have sunk most men into oblivion. It would be difficult to find another superior to him in patience and persistent perseverance. His life is a series of valuable lessons to others.

From his early thinking years he manifested a precocious intellect. It was not possible to fetter such an

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one as he by the shackles of orthodoxy or custom. Gradually, as breaks the morning light upon the earth, did he break away from all the authorities save Truth. It may be that he has often been over-zealous; that is common to youth — mature years bring soberness. One thing — fear of poverty and all the scourges of persecution never gagged his mouth.

He early learned lessons of temperance, and could luxuriate on the plainest diet. Chain such a man down! The thing is not possible.

"The spirit in the end will have its way."

Byron was right. Denton's career is an illustration. His spirit *would* have its way in the getting of knowledge and imparting of it.

Radical in sentiment he presses on, hopefully and steadily. He is a man on whose word the world may depend. Let orthodox zealots defame — their bitter breath cannot hurt Denton. The leading scientists have little or no spmpathy with his researches in Psychometry and Spiritualism. That affects him no more than the breath of bigotry. He has built his philosophy on fact, and in no instance ignored the teachings of science. But he has done what the leading scientists had little prompting to do — shown from demonstrated fact that the unseen is more real than the seen, and consequently more enduring.

This could only be well done by an acquaintance with Psychology, Psychometry and Spiritualism. He had the patience to investigate, and has the courage to maintain the conclusions at which he arrived.

On the question of Capital and Labor, our Geologist has taught with effect. His motto is *men and good measures.*

I mark in his career, a steady, unflagging pursuit of knowledge, and a determined opposition to injustice of every kind and country. He is highly receptive and inspirational. Hence the rich store of thought that flows from his lips on the rostrum. No subject he handles seems difficult to him. The charm of his teaching lies in his humanitarianism. He has the rare ability of making abstruse problems clear to the common intellect. Hence his popularity as a speaker and writer. He does not in his most radical expressions lose sight of essential truths

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in Religion. His war is with myths, not truths. Others may advocate reform without touching the Bible. He cannot.

Why do the sects "make such ado?" A myriad Dentons could not annihilate a truth in or out of the Bible. Do they desire to nurture demonstrated falsehoods or fables? If not, they may grasp Denton by the hand, and realise that he is their friend.

We each move in orbits of our own. Denton's orbit is neither mine nor yours, kind reader. Let us not fail to "look him through and through" before passing judgment.

I have read the pages of his life book, and found much to interest. He has been and is a true worker. The world needs many such — may none know more struggles and prove less heroic. The Church has its list of moral heroes. Many of them shed a radiance of love over humanity. All honor to them. Let not the Church forget the lessons of righteousness and pronounce the *Odium Theologicum* upon Denton because he has too large a soul to be satisfied with the husks of church dogmas.

"What man *has* done man *can* do"

Denton may hold his head proudly up. No princely sychophant can hope to stand by his side.

Compared with the multitude of advanced thinkers, he does not fall back for want of principle or true manhood. He is William Denton and none other, daring to utter his boldest thoughts. Who finds fault? None but the slave to authority. Petty prejudice and fierce malevolence may rule for a time, but they cannot kill the Dentons, or stem the resistless waves of Reform.

We learn from the lives of such men as Denton, that the orthodox have no special claim upon the virtues. Examples of Heroism and Manhood are not confined to the sons of affluence and creed. Humanitarianism is larger than any Church, and can offer illustrations of heroic self-sacrifice, noble endurance and moral worth. A library of the lives of such, will grow with the reign of Justice. It is time the priest ceased to damn the fair fame of the world's progressive heroes. Soon the millions will rise to "Heavenly eminences," of freedom, and see with "other, larger eyes," than the priest. Till then, may Denton and all who recognise "The Truth that maketh free," work on in Faith, Hope and Charity.

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